

Deuteronomy 22:30

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In this last case, Moses prohibited a man from marrying a woman who was formerly his father's wife and was possibly his stepmother.

In the Hebrew text, this verse is the opening verse of chapter 23. This verse contains the last case given by Moses concerning marital purity. In this case, Moses stated that *a man shall not take his father's wife* (v. 30). This is a restatement of what the Suzerain (Ruler) God stated in the book of Leviticus, commanding the people that no one was to *uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness* ([Leviticus 18:8](#)).

The verb translated as *take* (Heb. "lāqah") in this verse has the idea of taking someone in marriage (22:13). This command—*a man shall not take his father's wife*—gives rise to two possible scenarios. The first one assumes that the father has died or perhaps has divorced his wife; otherwise, it could have been impossible for the son to marry his father's wife. Second, the *wife* could be a widowed stepmother who could have been about the age of the son.

Regardless of the situation, Moses warned the man against marrying his father's wife because she was *his father's wife*. This was to be avoided so as to *not uncover his father's skirt*. This phrase is one of several euphemisms in Hebrew to refer to immoral sexual activity. It would bring dishonor upon the family for a son to have sexual relations with his father's wife, thus violating the commandment to *honor your father and your mother* ([Exodus 20:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:12](#)).

In [Leviticus 18](#), a long list of twisted family incestual relationships are cited as being typical behaviors within the community of Israel. The overall picture is one of wide-spread exploitation. The foundational boundary against such destructive behavior was to carefully protect the sanctity of the marriage between husband and wife.

Biblical Text:

³⁰ **A man shall not take his father's wife so that he will not uncover his father's skirt.**